

STATINTL

CIA Report Indicates LBJ In Error on Civilian Toll

WASHINGTON -- On Dec. 31, 1966, after New York Times Correspondent Harrison Salisbury caused a furor by reporting civilian casualties in North Vietnam, President Johnson said at a news conference that it was the policy of his government "to bomb only military targets." "We do everything we can to minimize" civilian casualties, Johnson said.

In January 1967, however, a secret CIA report on the 1966 bombing program declared: "Estimated civilian and military casualties went from 13,000 to 23,000-24,000 (about 80 per cent civilians) but the figures remained small relative to the 18 million population."

The words in parentheses, which were in the original CIA report, meant that as many as 19,000 North Vietnamese civilians probably were killed by U.S. bombing that year alone.

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CYNICISM IN SECRET -- On May 23, 1966, U.S. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge cabled Washington an unflattering private assessment of our allies: "It is obviously true that the Vietnamese are not today ready for self-government, and that the French actively tried to unfit them for self government . . . But if we are going to adopt the policy of turning every country that is unfit for self-government over to the Communists, there won't be much of the world left."

CRYSTAL BALL DEPARTMENT: On April 16, 1966 -- two and a half years before the presidential elections -- Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy wrote a memo saying, "As we look a year or two ahead, with a military program that would require major further budget costs, with all their implications for taxes and domestic programs, and with steady and probably rising casualties, the war could well become an albatross around the administration's neck, at least equal to what Korea was for President Truman in 1952."

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UNLUCKY THIRTEEN -- The joint chiefs of staff showed high confidence in the accuracy of their "surgical" bombing in April 1966, when they recommended an attack on petroleum dumps in Hanoi. The Pentagon papers analyst commented: "somewhat optimistically, the report (from the JCS) estimated that the (petroleum) strike would involve only 13 civilian casualties . . ."

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EXPENDABLE KY -- On April 12, 1966, the U.S. Ambassador in Saigon, Maxwell Taylor, sent a memo to the President on an uprising led by the monk Tri Quang against the ruling directorate headed by Marshal (now vice president) Nguyen Cao Ky. Taylor wrote: "We must prevent Tri Quang from overthrowing the directorate (with or without Ky who personally is expendable)." (Parentheses in original).

M - 463,503
S - 867,810

JUN 27 1971

CIA Bombing Report Called 80% Civilian Casualties 'Small'

From Our Washington Bureau

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